

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 667
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
USNMR HAPE
USCINCEUR

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USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY
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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT NL
SUBJECT: FORMATION OF NEW DUTCH GOVERNMENT

REF: THE HAGUE 2835 (DTG 020833Z JUN 77)

1. SUMMARY: AFTER INITIAL DELAY CAUSED BY THE ACTIONS OF SOUTH MOLUCCAN TERRORISTS, THE FORMATION OF THE NEXT DUTCH GOVERNMENT HAS FINALLY BEGUN. VETERAN PUNDITS REFER TO IT AS THE PERIODIC GAME OF CHANCE. FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS POLITICIANS WILL BE ENGAGED IN AN ARCANE, INTRICATE AND TO OUTSIDERS NEARLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE PROCESS OF DISCUSSION, BARGAINING, NEGOTIATION AND POLITICAL MANEUVERING. OTHER THAN THE LIKELIHOOD THAT DEN UYL WILL AGAIN BE PRIME MINISTER,
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THERE IS LITTLE CLARITY. WE WILL ENDEAVOR TO FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS CLOSELY BUT WILL REFRAIN FROM REPORTING EVENTS BLOW-BY-BLOW. AS WE INDICATED IN OUR ANNUAL ASSESSMENT, THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS WILL PRODUCE FEW, IF ANY, CHANGES IN DUTCH POLICIES OF INTEREST TO THE UNITED STATES. FURTHERMORE, THE ELECTION RESULT GUARANTEES THAT A NUMBER OF KEY OFFICIALS WITH WHOM WE HAVE BEEN DEALING WILL LIKELY

CONTINUE IN OFFICE. END SUMMARY

2. WITH THE MOLUCCAN SIEGE OUT OF THE WAY, THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT CAN FINALLY PROCEED. THE HANDLING OF THE AFFAIR HAS WON NEARLY UNIVERSAL PRAISE. ONCE AGAIN, AS HE HAD WHEN THE LOCKHEED SCANDAL TOUCHED PRINCE BERNHARD, PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL SHOWED HIS ABILITY SENSE THE MOOD OF THE COUNTRY. HE SET JUST THE RIGHT TONE IN HIS TV EXPLANATION TO AN ANXIOUS BUT RELIEVED PUBLIC OF THE GON POLICY DECISION TO END THE SIEGE BY FORCE. JUSTICE MINISTER VAN AGT ALSO GAINED STATURE. BOTH MEN, RIVALS IN THE RECENT CAMPAIGN AND IN THE CURRENT POST-ELECTORAL POLITICAL STRUGGLE FOR POWER, HAD WORDS OF HIGH PRAISE AND APPRECIATION FOR EACH OTHER.

3. IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE AMONG POLITICAL COGNOSCENTI THAT THE PROCESS OF GOVERNMENT FORMATION IS AN IN-GAME. IT IS SURPRISING TO SEE JUST HOW MYSTERIOUS THE GAME REALLY IS. IN THE PAST 20 YEARS THE VIEW HAS GAINED GROUND HERE THAT IN A DEMOCRACY THE VOTER SHOULD HAVE AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF INFLUENCING THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF HIS COUNTRY. SOME PARTIES, INCLUDING THE PVDA, HAVE IN FACT ADOPTED THE PRACTICE OF SPELLING OUT BEFORE THE ELECTIONS THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THEY WOULD PARTICIPATE IN A GOVERNMENT. THESE ATTEMPTS AT MODERNIZATION NOTWITHSTANDING, THERE IS STILL A LARGE GREY AND MURKY AREA BETWEEN THE ELECTIONS AND THE FORMATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THE PROCESS OF FORMING THE NEW GOVERNMENT REMAINS HIGHLY INTRICATE AND HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG CONTESTING POLITICAL

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LEADERS.

4. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS CLARITY ON SOME POINTS. ONE IS THAT WITH THE TREMENDOUS GAIN OF TEN SEATS THE PERSONAL STOCK OF SOCIALIST LEADER DEN UYL IS VERY HIGH AND IT IS WIDELY EXPECTED THAT HE WILL SUCCEED HIMSELF AS PRIME MINISTER. ANOTHER IS THAT, WITH THE HEAVY LOSSES SUFFERED BY VIRTUALLY ALL SMALL PARTIES, THERE ARE ONLY THREE MAJOR (PVDA, CDA, VVD) AND ONE MIDDLE-SIZED (D'66) PARTY WHICH MATTER IN THE CABINET FORMATION. ALSO, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE BELIEF THAT THE CABINET EMERGING AT THE END OF THE ROAD WILL BE CENTER/ LEFT.

5. WHAT IS NOT CLEAR IS WHETHER DEN UYL, NOW DESIGNATED AS "FORMATEUR," WILL SUCCEED ON THE FIRST TRY. THERE IS ROUGH FEELING BETWEEN THE PVDA AND THE CDA. THE CDA WAS NEVER WILLING TO BE AS PROGRESSIVE AS DEN UYL'S PVDA; VAN AGT TRIPPED UP THE PREVIOUS COALITION JUST SHORT OF THE FINISH LINE AND THE CDA PUT A LOT OF DISTANCE BETWEEN ITSELF

AND THE PVDA DURING THE CAMPAGIN. DEN UYL SHOULD BE ABLE
TO SMOOTH A LOT OF ROUGH EDGES, BUT HE IS NOT LIKELY TO

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REMOVE FEELINGS OF MUTUAL DISTRUST ALTOGETHER. THERE IS
SPECULATION THAT THE CDA, WHICH HARBORS BRUISED FEELINGS
FOR NOT HAVING EMERGED AS THE LEADING PARTY, IS BEGRUDGING
DEN UYL THE CHANCE OF FORMING HIS OWN CABINET. ACCORDING
TO THIS VERSION, DEN UYL WILL FAIL IN HIS INITIAL ATTEMPT
TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. THE QUEEN MIGHT THEN APPOINT ONE OR
MORE "INFORMATEURS." THESE WOULD DO THE NECESSARY SPADE WORK
TO ALLOW A NEW "FORMATEUR" TO PUT TOGETHER A GOVERNMENT
IN WHICH DEN UYL WOULD BE THE PRIME MINISTER.

6. SHOULD DEN UYL EVENTUALLY EMERGE AS PRIME MINISTER OF
A CENTER/LEFT COALITION, D'66 IS LIKELY TO BE INCLUDED.
SUCH A COALITION WOULD HAVE 110 SEATS OUT OF 150. THUS,
IT WOULD HAVE STRONG PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT, AT LEAST AS
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LONG AS THE COALITION COULD HOLD TOGETHER ON ITS PROGRAMS. TWO POSSIBILITIES FOR THE COMPOSITION OF A GOVERNMENT BASED ON SUCH A COALITION ARE NOW BEING MENTIONED: 8-7-1 OR 7-7-1, THE DIFFERENCE BEING THE NUMBER OF SEATS FOR THE PVDA.

7. A LESS LIKELY BUT POSSIBLE OUTCOME WOULD BE A CENTER-RIGHT COALITION. HERE, THE SCENARIO WOULD CALL FOR FAILURE TO FORM A CENTER/LEFT COALITION, PERHAPS AFTER SEVERAL TRIES. THE CDA WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO INTRANSIGENT. ISSUES SUCH AS ABORTION WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN AMENABLE TO COMPROMISE. THE CDA WOULD THEN TURN TO THE LIBERALS (VVD). SUCH A COALITION WOULD HAVE A BARE MAJORITY --77 OUT OF 150-- AND ENJOY SUPPORT OF A FEW SPLINTER PARTIES SUCH AS DS'70. WHAT STRIKES US IS THAT IN ALL THIS SPECULATION WE CONTINUE TO HEAR THE SUGGESTION THAT WHATEVER GOVERNMENT EMERGES IT IS NOT LIKELY TO LAST VERY LONG.

8. WHILE THE PVDA, D'66 AND THE VVD HAVE ALL EMERGED FROM THE ELECTIONS WITH CONSIDERABLE COHESION, THIS IS NOT TRUE OF THE CDA. IN FACT, THAT PARTY HAS BADLY DISAPPOINTED THOSE WHO HAD HOPED THAT ITS CREATION WOULD CAP THE HISTORICAL CHASM AMONG THE CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT PARTIES AND REVERSE THE STEADY ELECTORAL DECLINE OF THE PAST DECADE. WITHIN DAYS AFTER THE ELECTIONS, SERIOUS INFIGHTING BROKE OUT ABOUT THE DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT ANDRIESEN, WHO IN THE PAST FEW YEARS WAS THE MOST FORMIDABLE PARLIAMENTARY COUNTERWEIGHT TO DEN UYL, WILL NEED TO BE PACIFIED WITH A MAJOR POST. SOME MENTION HIM AS A CANDIDATE FOR FOREIGN MINISTER, THOUGH OTHERS ARE CONFIDENT THAT VAN DER STOEL WILL STAY ON.

9. THE OUTCOME IS NOT LIKELY TO ALTER SIGNIFICANTLY DUTCH POLICIES WHICH TOUCH US INTERESTS. LAST WEEK AGRICULTURE MINISTER VAN DER STEE DISCLOSED TO EMBOFF THAT THE CDA HAD PUT THE PVDA ON NOTICE IT WOULD REQUIRE COMMIT-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MENTS TOWARD A STRONG DUTCH DEFENSE EFFORT. DEVELOPMENT AID POLICIES AND THE DUTCH ROLE IN THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE MAY BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE MUCH AS BEFORE, THOUGH THE POSSIBLE DEPARTURE OF PRONK MIGHT CHANGE THE APPROACH IF NOT THE SUBSTANCE. MCCLSOKEY

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